

STATUS

N E W S L E T T E R

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June...

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EDITOR'S FILE

Get ready to breath a healthy sigh of relief! The **FONT WARS** are over... I finally got a hold of a font cartridge for the LaserJet I've been forced to look at for too long without having the ability to take advantage of (what?) and now I don't have to scramble around to come up with something that looks like the real thing...

Before I get too far along in my ramblings, I'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate Jim Parks: both of his articles on power and surge protection were reprinted in other Newsletters! "Surge Protection" in **LOCO** of Folly Beach, SC and "Building Your Own Power Supply" in **ACE** of Eugene, OR... nice going, Jim.

Now, don't you wish the same thing could happen to you?

It seems that the theme for this month's issue might best be described as "All Dressed Up With Nowhere To Go". Here we have this spiffy new look, and it seems like this is the lowest level of article submissions I've seen in months! Now's the

time to make your move and look "mahvalous" (and I mean that.)

I'd like to take a moment to touch on the subject of this months installment of Doug Boynton's **Telecomputing: Shareware**. As a developer of (in my own mind at least) software that might only see the light of day in the public domain, I find the idea of Shareware intriguing... think about it for a moment: no overhead, no middle men, no pressure. The hardest part about Shareware is sending the little bugger off into the unknown without the lifeline. Well, the idea may be interesting, but the reality is far from overwhelming.

Having sent one or two small things out over the IBM wires my personal score card reads: little buggers-3 replies-0. I don't know, maybe my software isn't as good as I thought it was, maybe people tried it and didn't think it was worth even the measly (by IBM standards) sum I was asking for it. Or maybe the Shareware concept hinges on faulty reasoning... people will only pay for something if you **make** them pay for it, make them plunk the bucks

down before they even get out the door. Letting the consumer decide when (or even if) he's going to pay takes a little more faith than I think I'll be able to muster for sometime...

Deep breaths, count slowly: one, two, three... OK I'm calm now, really.

Thanks this month go out to the aforementioned Mr. Boynton and to Scott Mathews for their articles. Thanks also to the Newsletter Exchange for providing the rest of the input this month...

THE DANGERS OF NON-STANDARD MEMORY EXPANSION

By Bill Wilkinson, OSS

This technical note is being written because so many of the memory expansion schemes I see being touted are NOT compatible with a standard 130XE. If you implement the memory expansion per most of these schemes, you will be missing one important feature of the 130XE: The ability to direct ANTIC to do its DMA to either main memory or the requested bank of memory. In a standard 130XE, clearing bit 5 to zero

requests ANTIC to follow the bank switching; setting bit 5 to a one tells it to remain in main memory, no matter what memory bank was requested.

This is an important feature! Mark Rose (also of OSS) and I will take credit for being instrumental in the creation of the function of this bit. When Atari asked us to do DOS 2.5 and its RamDisk, their prototype hardware had ANTIC following bit 4 along with the CPU. This most obvious problem with this is that you can't use the extra banks for CPU purposes (e.g., RamDisk) when ANTIC is doing its DMA in the memory between \$4000 and \$7FFF. The problem was especially acute with AtariWriter (the 16K cartridge version), since its display memory is ALWAYS in this range.

Actually, Mark and I found that if you are ONLY using the bank select memory for a RamDisk, this is not an onerous restriction. It simply means that you could only do pseudo-sector transfers during vertical blank. And in fact, DOS 2.5 still has a flag in it which you can POKE which will tell it to only use extended

memory during deferred vertical blank.

Now, there was another hardware solution, which we mentioned to Atari: simply never allow ANTIC to use extended memory. We discussed the two options with Atari, and both they and we decided we felt strongly that the capability of bank selecting ANTIC's memory was important. Thus the use of that bit.

So, if your 800XL hardware mods works with the Atari-Writer cartridge, then you obviously adopted that second hardware solution: don't let ANTIC use extended memory. That is not a really terrible decision (especially if it is economically motivated), but it does mean that it is possible that some future 130XE software will not run on your modified machine. (Actually, I already have at least one piece of software written in ACTION!, which depends on the 130XE method. But it's only an ultra-fast picture switching demo, so it's no big deal.)

There is a mod to both the 130XE and 800XL which maintains the 130XE/ANTIC bank select capability. It was designed by Charles Andrews of Eugene, Oregon, and he showed a 320XE using

this mod at CES in January (in Atari's booth, as a courtesy to him by Atari... though it does appear to be an implicit endorsement of this scheme). I believe his method uses an entirely separate port for controlling the beyond-130XE extensions (in the \$D6xx range, maybe?). However, I have devised a method of doing the same thing using only Port B. The scheme is outlined in the following paragraph.

A "LEGAL" 320XE: This mod depends on the fact that the diagnostic ROM area is only used at power up or by the self-test routines. At these time, both ANTIC and the CPU are using only main memory, so bits 4 and 5 of \$D301 are both set to one. Thus we change the "enable" of the diagnostics from the logic equation $\text{diag_enable} = \text{not_bit7}$ to $\text{diag_enable} = \text{not_bit7 and bit4 and bit5}$.

Then the enable for the extended RAM becomes $\text{RAM_enable} = (\text{not_bit4 or not_bit5})$ and we can now use bit 6 and 7 for bank selection in the same manner that other schemes use bit 6 and 5. Reason this works: even if Atari ever changes the self-diagnostics so that they

check the extended RAM, they can't put that particular code in the ROM which overlays \$5000-\$57FF, because that's right in the middle of the RAM area they need to check.

TELECOMPUTING

By Doug Boynton

FREWARE isn't. But what is it?

Software on the honor system? Perhaps. Software on the guilt system? Maybe. Good stuff? Sometimes. Useful? It depends.

If you consider commercially published software on the one hand, and public domain software on the other, freeware sits somewhere in the middle. It's free for the asking, but usually with the request that if you like it, and use it, you send a few bucks to the author. Fair enough.

One of the more famous pieces of freeware was written for the IBM-PC (and clones). It's called PC-TALK, and it's become one of the most-used communications programs for the IBM. It's available on most IBM

Bulletin Boards. It's free for the asking; but comes with a request for \$30.00. Let's say there's 100,000 copies out there, floating around, and that one in 20 people sends in the loot. That's \$150,000. Not bad. That's without the usual overhead of the distribution chain, too, since most freeware is available on Bulletin Board Systems.

What is good freeware? Here's how I would set the criteria:

USEFUL: The program should do something you need done often; or something you need done badly once in a while, like rescuing a trashed disk. It should be a program you would buy (at some price) were it available commercially.

WELL DOCUMENTED: This is where most freeware falls short. The author figures you know as much about the program as he does, so you're left wondering how to make the darned thing work. If it doesn't pass this test, it's not worth a red cent.

SUPPORT: There should be the promise of updates, or patches to fix any bugs that

crop up.

AN ADDRESS: You should know who this person is, and how to reach him or her. I don't know why I feel this is so important; maybe I'd just like to know who's family I'm helping to support. Or maybe where to turn for help.

A COPYRIGHT: A copyright notice will alert you to the fact that the author thinks so much of the software that he or she is afraid a commercial concern might try to rip him or her off. If the author has gone through the hassle of a copyright, the software is worth looking at carefully.

Darned few pieces of freeware fit those criteria. One of the first pieces of freeware I saw was a program that was rather lengthy, lavish with graphics, and was obviously filled with intricate code. It formatted disks. The author asked for a donation of ten dollars. For a program that formatted disks.

What programs fit this criteria for the Atari? I'd say the AMODEM 7.x series by Trent Dudley; and the EXPRESS! series for the 835, 1030, and 850-type modems are

good examples. Gary Crider's various and sundry disk utility programs would also fit the category.

Much of the rest is "guiltware".

OTHER ITEMS: GENIE's ATARI ROUNDTABLE is rapidly filling up with some nice-looking programs for the ST, including a series that creates a FORTH compiler.

CompuServe's SIG*Atari suffered a complete crash recently; as a result, the data libraries were slow and in some cases, unresponsive for a few days.

There is a Bulletin Board program now available that works with the Atari 835, 1030, and XM301 modems. It's available both on GENie and CompuServe.

Keith Ledbetter (EXPRESS!) is now working on a BBS program. It's running on the Richmond-area "MIDNIGHT EXPRESS" BBS.

That's all for this time. Keep the NAK's to a minimum.

NEXT TIME: BBS
ETTIQUITE (Revisited)

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STATUS MINUTES

Business Meeting May 5, 1986

The meeting was called to order by President Gene Rodriguez at 7:15 PM.

The minutes of the 05/03/86 Executive Committee Meeting were read.

President Rodriguez urged all members to prepare for the group's meetings to begin at 7PM sharp in the future.

President Rodriguez explained how the group would have to find a new meeting room by June, as the school had withdrawn its space since Dave Howell wished to become less active in the group and would not be attending every meeting. Bill Wright is working on finding a new meeting place.

President Rodriguez outlined his discussion with the new ATARI Users Group Representative, Sandy Austin, who previewed some of the upcoming software from ATARI, including an XL/XE 80-column adapter.

The group's new treasurer, David Levy, was introduced. President Rodriguez explained that the audit of the club's

books was not yet complete. Outgoing Treasurer J. C. Petty reported that the group did not have as much money in the treasury as was thought. Treasurer Levy reported that the audit would continue with the help of Ken Baum; and he hoped to have it completed by the June business meeting (06/02).

President Rodriguez urged all members to touch base with Membership Chairman Bill Wright to make sure they were listed on the membership list and outlined the upcoming issue of new membership cards.

Activities Director Buck Maddrey conducted a drawing for door prizes, including several packs of disks donated to the group by INTERFACE, to thank us for our donation of a Bulletin Board to their store.

No old or new business was discussed.

Following adjournment of the business meeting at 7:51 PM, Jerome Rubin of I/O Computer demonstrated the new ATARI 1040ST computer.

General Meeting May 19, 1986

The meeting was called to

order by President Gene Rodriguez at 7:09 PM.

President Rodriguez announced that STATUS will hold two meetings in June at the Baylake Pines Private School.

The latest information on new hardware and software from Atari and other vendors was presented.

Nip Harrison, Bill Lynn, Bobby Prince, and Matt Huffman were the winners of the May software door prizes.

Activities Chairman Buck Maddrey conducted a member interest survey.

Following adjournment of the meeting at 7:48 PM, the new style membership cards were issued to members present.

HOME COMPUTER MAGAZINE

by Scott Mathews

Attention!!

Home Computer Magazine now supports Atari! Since there are only three magazines I can think of that devote any substantial support of Atari, HCM's expansion into the Atari

8-bit world deserves notice.

It seems that the folks at Emerald Valley Publishing have adapted and expanded their original magazine, 99ER magazine, to include Atari, Apple, Commodore, IBM, and T/I computers. Home Computer Magazine claims it is NOT a sprawling, general interest publication but a 5 system-specific magazine under one cover. It advocates that this focused approach will aid readers in gaining knowledge from the tips, ideas, and techniques provided for these five systems. Maybe so. But, only the last two issues of HCM (i.e., Vol. 5, # 5 & 6) offer expanded coverage for Atari. Before springing for a \$25 one year subscription, it might be wise to cultivate a wait-and-see attitude.

The issue I perused (# 5.6) is certainly impressive for a number of reasons. HCM's format is distinctive and clear. Marginal labels divide the issue into five basic sections. These sections include software instructions, product reviews, tutorials, type-in listings, and a programmer's window. The programmer's window is especially useful because it includes specific

information about each listing and serves to enhance programming knowledge. Interspersed throughout the sections is a new products and industry news journal.

Of special note is the fact that HCM contains no outside advertising. The magazine touts that "each issue provides uninterrupted editorial flow and graphic layouts for better comprehension...unbiased product reviews," and "the best free software available anywhere." Again, maybe so. But, HCM (#5.6) also contains at least 30 pages touting its own products and the magazine itself.

Like Antic, Home Computer Magazine offers tape or disk copies of each issue's program listings. You pay \$5.95 (CHEAP!) for this media. This low price is incentive enough, but you should remember only issues #5.5 and 5.6 include Atari programs. Another incentive is that you can get free media when you subscribe. All in all, a decent enough deal. HCM seems to be going all out to gain new readers.

Getting down to brass tacks -- what's in HCM for Atarians? Issue #5.6 contains

seven programs for the Atari computer. Four of these type-ins include programmer's windows. "Electronic Postman" is a mailing list program. (To get the most from this one, you really need "Electronic Typewriter" from #5.5 for merging files.) "Serf City" is a two-player economics simulation of some merit for those fascinated by this type of game. "Cell Mates" is, by far, the most outstanding Atari program of this issue. This program simulates a cell's fascinating and complex ecosystem. A player must keep this fragile system balanced by taking on the role of the cell's nucleus. "NanoAssembler", a companion to "NanoProcessor" (see #5.5 again) shows how an assembler can access machine language. Shorter listings include a listing formatter, a sine wave generator, and a one-liner that turns characters upside-down. This mixed bag of type-ins should offer something for everyone. It is to HCM's credit that the programs valiantly live up to the claim to "provide a balance of productivity, entertainment, education, utilities, and computer literacy in serving the needs of novice and pro alike."

If you enjoy typing

programs or are just too cheap to purchase the media, HCM's listings may take some getting use to. The guide to typing is comprehensible and HCM does provide an error detection program called "Bug Out". Yet, the vertical lines used within each listing make things look mighty "busy" at first glance. There are very special explanations given for accessing the Atari's unique graphic characters. All of this takes some time to get adjusted to.

That last phrase seems to sum up things about Home Computer Magazine. It plans to offer a great deal for Atari users. Gary Kaplan, editor-in-chief, says HCM has "only just scratched the tip of the iceberg in making the Atari user base aware of HCM's new coverage." HCM seems to be off to a great start in supporting Atarians. Issue #5.6 does reflect a conscientious and enthusiastic effort to capture our attention. But, HCM is going to take some time to get adjusted to. I encourage you to form your own impressions. Issues are \$3.50 and available at Games-N-Gadgets and most book stores in the Tidewater area.

HabaView

By Jon Rodman

JACG NewsLetter - May, 1986

HabaView is an exceptionally easy-to-use database program good for those whose needs are not terribly complicated. Although it lacks some features which may limit its usefulness, it operates smoothly with the ST's mouse and pull down command menus. Within five minutes of booting the program for the first time, I was able to lay out a form and begin to enter data.

HabaView displays data in either a List format or as a Form. In List, each field is a column and the records are rows. To lay out file fields, you drag down a menu and click on a "New Column" selection, and then give your field a name and type (e.g. text, amount, date, etc.). Fields are open-ended: you do not specify their length when you set them up. What you do control is the number of characters in each field which will be displayed, by dragging the vertical column borders from side to side. This does not effect the content of the field and can be changed at any time.

Once the empty fields are laid out in columns, you have to click into the Form format to enter data. The fields now show as rectangular boxes. You can drag them around with the mouse to arrange them as you want and rubber-band the ends around to display the desired number of characters in each. All data entry or updates must be done in the Form mode. If at any time you should decide you need a new field, you can go to List and order up a new column. Once you have begun to enter data, you can not change the field type.

Sorting and searches are done in the List format. You can sort on any column by clicking the mouse on the desired column heading and making a menu selection. And it is fast. There is also a provision for progressive, multiple-column sorting. Searching for a range or string is done the same way.

HabaView will send lists or labels to a printer or write them to a disk to be picked up by a word processor. Report formatting is limited to deciding how wide each field should display on the page.

Some important things

that HabaView dose not do:

- You cannot add or change data in the List format, nor can you sort or search from the Form mode.

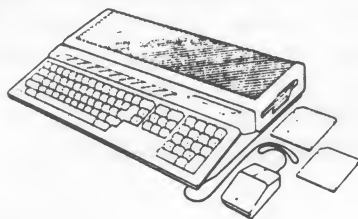
- Allow for calculation between fields (e.g. Field A= Field B + Field C).

- Allow for any global operations such as updates or deletions. Each record must be treated individually.

- There is no "utilities" section to handle a merging operation or to generate a subfile.

- The print function does not provide for any creative control in how a report is to be presented.

If none of these are important to your applications, then HabaView should do just fine for you. I am presently using it at work for some simple list-keeping, but I am still looking for the Ultimate Database Program to cover all my needs.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Welcome to David Levy our new Treasurer, he has taken over for J. C. Petty, who tendered his resignation to avoid any conflict of interest. J. C. along with Jim Parks have started a business called JP Enterprises, we look forward to some of their products, they hope to develop some items Atari forgot. A Special Thanks to both J. C., Jim and David for your contributions to STATUS.

This little gem from Feedback the Newsletter of the Adelaide Atari Computer Club, South Australia says it all...AACC is one of our Newsletter Exchange Groups, but what brought it to mind was that it also appeared in another one of our Exchange Groups, Blackhawk A.C.E. of Waterloo, Iowa. I think it's worth repeating, since it seems we are all experiencing the same problem...Lots of output without any input, well some input, but it's from the same folks. All I can say to these folks is THANK YOU for helping us produce OUR Newsletter...

What kind of member are you?

Are you an active member, the kind that would be missed?

Or are you just contented that your name is on the list?

Do you attend the meetings and mingle with the flock

Or do you stay at home then criticize and Knock?

Do you take an active part to help the work along?

Or are you satisfied to only just belong?

Think this over member, you know what's right from wrong.

Are you an active member Or do you just belong?

One note of interest, we are still looking for a new meeting place, Bill Wright is currently looking at several possibilities, this may cause us to take our usual summer vacation break during July and August. During the summer months, however our BBS will remain active as usual. This will allow those of you with modems to stay in touch: notes of interest will be posted on the board, and our new meeting place and times if we don't have one before the end of June.

S.T.A.T.U.S.

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily express or reflect the opinions of the Southside Tidewater Atari Technical Users Society. Some of the material contained herein may have been taken from bulletin boards and newsletters of other groups and should not necessarily be construed as fact.

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MEETINGS: S.T.A.T.U.S. meetings are held on the first and third Monday of each month at the Baylake Pines Private School, 2204 Treasure Island Dr., in Virginia Beach, at 6:30 p.m. All interested parties are welcome to attend.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES:

Submitted articles are preferred on disk text files, but will be gratefully accepted on hard copy (including handwriting) if you do not have a disc drive. If you have a modem, you can upload your articles to the Editor by calling 499-6021. Articles may be submitted anytime, but will probably not make that month's newsletter if submitted less than one week before the regular meeting date.

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